



Mental Health Update

June 9, 2006

Capital Expenditure Procedures Revised

The Vermont Department of Health's Division of Mental Health (VDH) and the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) have developed a revised application procedure for Designated Agencies planning to implement projects that involve large capital expenditures. Such Designated Agency (DA) projects are excluded from Certificate of Need (CON) review and approval by the Department of Banking, Insurance and Health Care Administration (BISHCA) under 18 V.S.A. § 9435(b). Rather, DA projects must be reviewed and approved by the Commissioners of VDH and DAIL. Since this CON exclusion was enacted, two DA's have submitted proposed projects that have been reviewed and approved utilizing the existing procedure.

The process of reviewing two projects has demonstrated the need for clearer and more succinct application procedures. Because VDH and DAIL review Designated Agencies' budgets annually, conduct program reviews and minimum standards reviews and formally designate agencies, the departments are familiar with much of the information necessary to review an agency's proposed project. For this reason, a more streamlined set of application questions and requested information seemed appropriate.

The official approval of a proposed DA project will now be called a "Certificate of Approval" (COA). The revised COA application packet will now include:

- a set of application instructions
- a review timeline
- a requested narrative that asks applicants to respond to applicable questions in five review criteria domains which are:
 - Relationship of Proposed Project to Agency Strategic Plan
 - Need for Proposed Project
 - Organizational Structure, Affiliations and Operations
 - Financial Feasibility
 - Documentation of Public Input
- financial tables

The revised written application procedures will be presented to the three State Standing committees (Adult, Children's and Developmental Services) at their upcoming June meetings. The committees will be asked to advise the two departments on the revised procedures. Following input from these three groups, the procedures will be revised as appropriate and implemented for future COA applications.

Qualified Mental Health Professionals Trained

On June 2nd, as part of an ongoing training program for community mental health crisis (CMHC) designated agency screeners, Jim Farrell (Acute Care Manager DMH) and Kristin Chandler (Assistant Attorney General) provided a training at Northeast Kingdom Mental Health Services in St Johnsbury on legal issues related to involuntary hospitalization of persons with mental illness. These trainings occur on a regular basis at CMHC designated agencies throughout the state, and are required in order for CMHC designated agency staff to become Commissioner-designated as Qualified Mental Health Professionals (QMHP).

Board of Health Grants VSH Another Six Month Conditional License

On June 6, 2006, the Vermont Board of Health met to review progress made at VSH during the past six months and to decide whether or not to extend VSH's conditional License for an additional six months. In December, 2005, the Board of Health issued a six-month conditional license to VSA and required hospital managers to submit biweekly reports about improvements at the facility. This week's extension of the license through December 30, 2006, reduces the reporting requirement to monthly and continues the expectation that evidence of continued progress in patient care and structural improvements will continue.

Health Care Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) Receives Approval to Construct New Building in Springfield

On May 31, the commissioners of the Department of Health and of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living approved a proposal by HCRS to construct a new 30,000 square foot building. The building will house the agency's administrative offices and will consolidate outpatient, children's and developmental services in one structure. The Agency sought public input throughout its planning phase and received favorable community endorsement for the \$8,000,000 building.

FUTURES PROJECT

Residential Recovery Program

The Residential Recovery work group met this week to assess progress on the Williamstown program. Speaking for the consortium of agencies planning the project, Michael Hartman reviewed the permitting process under Act 250. Since the property was previously approved as a place of lodging with kitchen and dining facilities, a change of use is required, not approval of a whole new facility. Significant work has been done in completing the necessary forms, including assurances concerning fire, safety, rescue and police services. Also in process is the Certificate of Approval from the Department of Health. The core issues are to demonstrate that finances are in order, the program is clinically appropriate, and the public is informed.

The work group will meet again on August 23rd to continue a broader discussion of next steps for the other residential recovery program of the Futures Project. Areas of interest are where should another program be located, what kind of a setting, and for how many people. The group's agenda also includes a policy discussion on VSH beds remaining empty after people move to a residential program, possibly leaving these beds in reserve in case someone returns in order to reduce the state hospital census.

VSH Employees Work Group

The VSH Employees Work Group agreed on revisions to their operating assumptions to further define, clarify and simplify the options for transitioning qualified VSH staff to a new inpatient program. Through a facilitation process, the group identified pros and cons of each option. They looked closely at language in the Futures Plan and the Capital Bill approved by the legislature to determine whether options for protecting employment status of the VSH workforce were consistent with the objectives of the Futures Plan and the Capital Bill. At their next meeting on June 21st, the group will begin ranking these options.

Upcoming Meetings

There are several important meetings for the Futures project in the next two weeks. The focus of the Care Management meeting on June 9th is for the clinical leaders of the inpatient and community mental health systems to develop a recommendation on needed bed capacity to bring to the Futures Advisory Committee. On June 12th the Futures Advisory Committee will have a special meeting to develop a recommendation to Secretary LaWare on bed capacity. In addition, the Advisory Committee will consider the policy drivers for co-location, the analysis of site options for new inpatient services on the FAHC campus, and the development parameters on the FAHC campus.

On June 16th we will meet with City of Burlington officials and department heads to review the material discussed with the Advisory Committee and to refine a communications and outreach plan with the greater Burlington community.

Finally, the Mental Health Joint Oversight Committee will meet on June 20th to weigh the results of the actuarial study and consider the recommendations of the clinical group and advisory committee on bed capacity. In addition, the Oversight Committee will review the analysis of sites on the FAHC campus. All meetings are open to the public.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 49.1 as of midnight Tuesday night. The average census for the past 45 days was 45.